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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington, D.C. 20250 (202) 720-4330

Letter No. 2599

February 26, 1993

Answered by [initials]

WILL IT HOLD? -- Good crop conditions exist in most winter wheat growing areas in the United States. If the favorable conditions continue in the coming months, winter wheat yields are likely to be above a year earlier. 1993 yields will be crucial for improving prospective 1993/94 wheat supplies. In China weather conditions have been favorable for winter grains. Changes in the EC's Common Agriculture Policy have lead to declines in area for soft wheat and durum. In the former Soviet Union winter grain planting was reduced about 10 percent. Wet weather last fall delayed harvest until it was too late to plant winter crops. Contact: Ed Allen (202) 219-0840.

CREDIT OUTLOOK -- Lower net farm income in 1993 and modest asset growth are expected to result in minimal increases in borrowing. Total farm debt at the beginning of this year is estimated at \$140 billion, up less than 1 percent from a year earlier. Farm debt is expected to increase only 1 to 2 percent this year, making farm loans a competitive environment for lenders. Farm banks are now among the strongest institutions in the banking system, and there is substantial excess capacity among agricultural lenders. Credit will remain tight for beginning and high risk farmers. Contact: Jerome Stam (202) 219-0892.

MACHINERY SALES -- Several factors indicate an encouraging forecast for machinery purchases this year. Farm income was higher last year, and the value of farm equity is forecast to increase in 1993. Also, interest rates are low. Farm tractor sales last year totaled 52,800 units, 9 percent below 1991. Combine sales were 7,700 which was 2,000 less than in 1991. Both tractor and combine unit sales are forecast to be up 1 to 2 percent this year. U.S. farm machinery exports are estimated at \$3.3 billion this year. Farm machinery imports, forecast at \$1.8 billion in 1993, are expected to decline for the third consecutive year. Farm machinery exports have exceeded imports for the last four years. Contact: Stan Daberkow (202) 219-0456.

MORE WITH LESS -- Herbicide mixed with paraffinic oil, which is similar to mineral oil, improves the control of johnsongrass and barnyardgrass in soybeans when applied at 1 gallon per acre than it does when mixed with water and applied at 20 gallon per acre. USDA researchers at the Application Technology Research Center at Stoneville, Mississippi, have developed an application system using a special nozzle and compressed air that atomizes the herbicide. The more concentrated droplets of the mixture are more toxic to weeds than the larger less concentrated droplets dispersed in water by conventional sprayers. Reduced herbicide use and water hauling can improve both the farmer's bottom line and the environment. Farmers can construct their own sprayer, but at this time the low application rates are not approved by the Environmental Protection Agency. Chemical industry officials say they plan to request registration at low application levels as new products come on the market. Contact: Chester McWhorter (601) 686-5221.



RURAL AREAS AND THE ECONOMY -- Overall conditions in rural areas are forecast to improve this year if the modest expansion in employment and income experienced at the close of 1992 is sustained. Research has shown that declines in the national unemployment rate are generally matched by declines in rural unemployment rates. However, employment and production in rural areas tend to depend more on exports. The uncertain export outlook, due to economic slowdowns in Japan and Germany, suggests that conditions may improve somewhat more slowly in rural areas than in the overall economy this year. **Contact:** Jennifer Beattie (202) 219-0782.

HIGH-VALUE EXPORTS -- U.S. exports of consumer-oriented high-value products could set a record in 1993. Gains during 1992 were registered in dairy products, snack foods, breakfast foods, wine and beer. Declines were noted in fresh fruit, tree nuts and nursery products. Most recent statistics show that as of the end of November last year, high-value exports totaled \$2.7 billion, 17 percent ahead of the same period a year earlier and indicating a strong trend into 1993. **Contact:** Thomas St. Clair (202) 720-6821.

DEFENSE CUTS AND RURAL COMMUNITIES -- Off-farm income is important to many farm families. The fiscal year 1993 budget for the Department of Defense (DoD) calls for a 20 percent reduction in spending during 1992-1997. The economic health of rural communities near military bases can depend on retail sales to military personnel, and on civilian jobs on the bases. To help mitigate the impact of base closures, DoD's Office of Economic Adjustment provides assistance to the affected communities. It arranges for the vacated base, including buildings and equipment, to be released to the community for redevelopment. Rural counties have been successful in converting vacant bases to alternate uses, such as for schools, local government buildings, recreation areas, airports, or prisons. **Contact:** Karen Hamrick (202) 219-0782.

NEW USE FOR PEPPERMINT -- Scientists with USDA's Agricultural Research Service have found that extracts from peppermint and other plants will deter northern fowl mites from feeding on chickens. The mites cause \$80 million in reduced U.S. egg production. **Contact:** John Carroll (301) 504-9017.

COMPARING PRICES -- A 15-item basket of food that costs \$47 in Washington, D.C. will set you back \$158 in Tokyo. In a recent comparison of food prices in capitals around the world, Tokyo led the list. Second place went to Bern, Switzerland at \$123. Paris was 6th at \$73, and Rome was 9th at \$65. The least expensive was Brasilia, Brazil at \$25. As a share of weekly per capita income, the cost of the 15-item food basket is greatest in Seoul at 75 percent. The burden on income for the food basket was lowest in Washington, D.C. at 11 percent. **Contact:** Thomas St. Clair (202) 720-6821.

AMENDING FEDERAL MILK ORDERS -- If approved by dairy farmers, USDA will amend all federal milk marketing orders to make a three-class pricing system standard, and provide a mechanism for pricing at bulk fluid rates reconstituted milk that is used for drinking purposes. **Contact:** Connie Crunkleton (202) 720-8998.

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA # 1864 -- Pat O'Leary explores how a special program is reclaiming land that was once abandoned to strip coal mines. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME # 1346 -- Stopping a pesky fruit fly; it's almost "turf time"; environmental landscaping; transplanting on time; speciality coffees for beginners. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1856 -- USDA News Highlights; winter jolts livestock industry; new policy for corn loans eliminates "double discount"; mechanized grain sniffers; computerized cotton ginning. (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1609 -- Beef flavor booster; gene shuffling; tomatoes in space; eggplant in Oklahoma; navy bean alternative. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Tuesday, Mar. 9, crop and weather update; Wednesday, Mar. 10, U.S. crop production, world ag supply and demand; Thursday, Mar. 11, world ag & grain situation, world oilseed situation, world cotton situation; Friday, Mar. 12, sugar outlook; Monday, Mar. 15, milk production. These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.

DIAL THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359.
Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

FEATURES -- Lynn Wyvill reports on USDA ethanol research.

ACTUALITIES -- Norton Strommen, USDA chief meteorologist, on the latest weather and crop progress; USDA economist Ron Gustafson on cattle inventory and prices; USDA economist Joel Greene on the ag trade surplus; and USDA economist Jerome Stam on farm credit.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- DeBoria Janifer reports on food stamp cash-out projects; Pat O'Leary visits Delaware's We C.A.R.E. conservation team; and Lynn Wyvill reports on the USDA National Parasite Collection.

EVERY OTHER WEEK -- Agriculture Update with anchors Eric Parsons and Lori Spiczka. 4:30 of USDA farm program information in news desk format with B-roll.

Available on Satellite Galaxy 6, channel 23, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 4160 MHz.: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT, Saturdays from 10 - 10:30 a.m., EDT, and Mondays from 8 - 8:30 a.m., EDT.

OFFMIKE

12th ANNUAL...WIBW Farm Profit Conference was attended by 450 farmers, says **Kelly Lenz** (WIBW/Kansas Ag Network, Topeka, KS). The program featured six speakers, including Congressman **Dan Glickman** (D-4th KS), and USDA chief meteorologist **Norton Strommen**. Kelly says there is good news regarding the nation's first Pesticide Management Area being conducted in his region. The goal of the project is to monitor and reduce pesticide runoff into surface water by using voluntary compliance. Results so far show that the program is working, and could help set standards nationwide. Kelly says they conducted a survey at the conference that included state and national issues. 71% of those participating said they would support cuts in spending for USDA offices and services. 60% want the Conservation Reserve Program to continue. And 47%, the largest percentage, were in favor of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

CONGRATULATIONS...to Orion Samuelson (WGN/Tribune Radio Network, Chicago, IL) selected by House Agriculture Committee Chairman **KiKa de la Garza** (D-15th TX) to serve as moderator at the retreat of Committee members in early February. Orion lead the discussions on long-term farm policy.

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Radio-TV Division
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CONGRATULATIONS...to Ken Tanner (WRAL-TV/Tobacco Radio Network, Raleigh, NC). Ken received the Media Award from the Virginia Soybean Association for his outstanding coverage of soybean issues. Ken says the award has sentimental value too because its from his home state. He's also received Media Awards from the North Carolina and South Carolina soybean associations.

LEAVING BROADCASTING...is Ron Hendren (WTAD, Quincy, IL). Ron concludes a 17 year farm broadcasting career to pursue career opportunities with the Prudential Company. Ron will remain in the New London, MO area.

NATIONAL AGRICULTURE WEEK...is March 14-20. National Agriculture Day in March 20. Does your station have plans to observe the event? The annual observance is created to help consumers understand that they have a stake in agriculture's future.

VIC POWELL
Chief, Radio & TV Division